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SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO HOSTS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ADOPTION

¶1. SUMMARY: In commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the signature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Burkina Faso and the Italian Government co-hosted an international conference on adoption in Ouagadougou. National adoptions are uncommon, only 118 in the last five years, and international adoptions, mainly to France, are becoming more prevalent. END SUMMARY.

Adoption brings Burkinabe, Italians and ECOWAS member together:

¶2. To mark the 20th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (November 1989), the GOBF, along with the Italian Government's Commission on International Adoptions hosted a three day conference on adoption in Ouagadougou (7-9 December). According to the Minister for Social Action and National Solidarity Mrs. Pascaline Tamini, progress has been made over the last two decades but much still remains to be accomplished in order to adequately protect children, especially those abandoned or orphaned. According to her, the fundamental question which adoption poses is "how can adoption, either national or international, guarantee the protection and survival of the child and furthermore ensure that the child grows up in a healthy environment that allows for mental, psychological and physical equilibrium". Participants in the conference agreed that dialogue, between state, institutions and State actors, is imperative in order to "protect these fragile beings."

¶3. Representatives from ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) noted that all countries in the sub-region urgently need to ratify the Hague Convention on adoption. To date only 4 of the 16 ECOWAS members have. Signatories so far are Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea and Togo. ECOWAS delegates reminded conference participants of the Arch of Zoe scandal, and emphasized that this type of adoption scandal must never happen again (Note: In October 2007 Arch of Zoe members were arrested by Chadian authorities while trying to smuggle 103 supposed orphans to France. End Note.) The Italian representatives and President of the International Adoption Commission, Carlo Giovanardi, explained that the aim of this international conference was to dialogue and exchange country best practice examples. The conference also sought to encourage and help countries change their national legislations pertaining to adoption in order to protect each orphaned child.

Snapshot on adoption in Burkina Faso:

¶4. The number of "formal" internal Burkinabe adoptions is small, on average only about 24 per year, but that does not reflect the thousands, if not tens of thousands of "informal" adoptions. In essence, many families take in an orphaned niece, nephew or cousin without ever making that adoption "legal". In the last ten years, international adoptions from Burkina Faso have numbered on average 100 per year. Burkina Faso recognizes two types of adoptions, "simple" which does

not sever family ties to the biological family, and "plenary" adoption which irrevocable severs any pre-existing biological ties. For Burkina Faso, plenary adoption must be pronounced to qualify a child for international adoption.

- Number of orphanages in Burkina Faso: 65 (in 2008)
- Number of wards of the State: 3, 264 (in 2008) of which 40% are girls
- Number of adoption within Burkina Faso: 118 (from 2003-2008)
- Number of international adoptions: 814 (1998-2006)
- Primary country adopting Burkinabe children: France, with 85% of all international adoptions
- Other countries adopting Burkinabe children: Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, US.
- Number of children adopted by American families: 5 (2003-2009)

HANKINS